

# Youth Crime and Incarceration



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# Youth Crime

## Facts in Brief



Popular perception holds that youth are the main perpetrators of violent crime. The data reveal that a small portion of youth are actually involved in crime. For related information, please see the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention's *Facts in Brief on Youth Incarceration* and *Girls and Violence*.

## Glossary:

*Juveniles* - are under 18 unless otherwise noted.

*Violent crime index* - murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault.

*Clearance or cleared* - clearance statistics measure the proportion of reported crimes that were resolved by an arrest or other, exceptional means (e.g., death of the offender, unwillingness of the victim to cooperate).

## In the Nation



Only a small proportion of youth are involved in crime. Less than one-half of 1% of all juveniles in the U.S. were arrested for a Violent Crime Index offense in 1994.<sup>1</sup>

Youth crime has declined. Violent crime arrest rates fell 4% in 1995 for juveniles 17 and under, the first drop since 1987. The decline was greatest at 7% for juveniles ages 10-14.<sup>2</sup>

Juvenile arrest rates for murder in 1995 fell by 14% from 1994 and 23% since 1993.<sup>3</sup>

6% of all juvenile arrests in 1994 were for a Violent Crime Index offense. Half of these arrests involved juveniles below age 16, half involved Caucasians.<sup>4</sup>

Most violent crime is committed by adults. Juveniles accounted for 19% of all violent crime arrests and 14% of all violent crimes cleared by law enforcement.<sup>5</sup>

## In California



Most violent crime in California is being committed by adults. Juvenile arrests accounted for 14.7% (22,601) of the 154,138 arrests for violent offenses in 1994.<sup>6</sup>

Juvenile arrests accounted for 18.3% (542) of the 2,963 arrests for homicide.<sup>7</sup>

## References



1 Snyder, Howard N., Sickmund, Melissa, and Poe-Yamagata, Eileen. Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1996 Update on Violence. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, February 1996, p.14.

2 Snyder, Howard. National Center for Juvenile Justice. Unpublished FBI machine readable data files of arrests. December 1996.

3 Snyder, Howard. Juvenile Arrests 1995. Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Bulletin, February 1997. p. 2.

4 Snyder, Howard N., Sickmund, Melissa, and Poe-Yamagata, Eileen. Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1996 Update on Violence. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, February 1996, p.10.

5 *ibid*, p. 13.

6 California Department of Justice. Crime and Delinquency in California, 1994. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Justice, 1994, p.37.

7 *ibid*, p.39.

# Youth Incarceration

## Facts in Brief



Although incarceration data are complex and can be difficult to interpret, it is important to understand the startling picture these data present. A selection of the best data with detailed explanatory references and a glossary of terms are provided below. For related information, please see the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention's [Facts in Brief for Youth Crime](#), [Girls and Violence](#) and [Full-Service Schools](#).

## Glossary:

*Admissions* - Number of admissions to a facility regardless of length of stay (for example the stay could be as short as a single day). This number does not reflect the number of individuals and could include numerous admissions for a single individual.

*One day counts* - The number of individuals in a facility on a given day.

*Public & Private Facilities* includes: detention centers, shelters, reception/diagnostic centers, training schools, ranch/camp or farm, halfway houses or group homes.

*Incarceration* - includes juveniles detained and committed; *Juvenile* refers to youth under 18 unless otherwise noted in references.

## In the Nation



There were 867,527 juvenile admissions to public and private facilities for delinquents in the U.S. in 1994.<sup>1</sup>

6,408 girls and 53,846 boys were incarcerated in public juvenile facilities in 1993, based on a one-day count in public facilities. Girls accounted for 11% of youth in custody. 12% of girls in custody (versus 27% of boys) had committed violent crimes. 12% of girls (versus 1% of boys) were in custody for status offenses (offenses such as truancy, running away and violating curfews that are offenses only because they are committed by juveniles).<sup>2</sup>

Most juvenile commitments to a juvenile correctional agency are for non-violent offenses. 28.1% of juveniles committed in 1994 were violent offenders while 71.9% were non-violent offenders.<sup>3</sup>

Most youth don't return to court. 60% of juveniles referred to juvenile court for the first time never return on a new charge.<sup>4</sup>

## In California



California incarcerates youth at the state level through the California Youth Authority and at the county level in juvenile halls and juvenile probation camps. Thus, in order to get the complete incarceration picture, it is necessary to look at populations in institutions at both the state and local level.

California incarcerated 28.8% (19,562 of 67,966) of all incarcerated youth in public facilities (based on a one day count) in the U.S. in 1995, though it has only 12% of the nation's youth population.<sup>5</sup>

In a one day count, a total of 8,664 juveniles (the vast majority of whom were under 18 at the time of offense) were incarcerated in the California Youth Authority on December 31, 1995.<sup>6</sup>

Based on a one-day count, 6,371 juveniles were held in California county juvenile halls and 4,115 in county probation camps in 1995.<sup>7</sup>

There were 3,788 first commitments (individuals sent for the first time) to the California Youth Authority in 1995. 55% of the offenders were committed primarily for violent offenses; 28% for property offenses; 8% for drug offenses and 8% for other offenses.<sup>8</sup> 47% of all 1995 California Youth Authority first commitments were Latino; 27% African American; 16% Caucasian; 6% Asian; and 3% other. Latino youth comprise 36.2% of the total California 11-17 youth population; African Americans 7.8%; Caucasian 44.4%; and other 11.5%.<sup>9</sup> Girls and boys were committed by juvenile and criminal courts to the California Youth Authority in 1995 in proportionate numbers by offense type though girls were committed for drug offenses slightly more often:

### Boys

- 49.4% of boys were committed for violent offenses;
- 32.1% for property offenses;
- 8.9% for drug offenses; and
- 9.6% for other offenses.

### Girls

- 50.7% of girls were committed for violent offenses;
- 32.6% for property offenses;
- 11.6% for drug offenses; and
- 5.1% for other offenses.<sup>10</sup>

California spends more to incarcerate a youth than it does to educate a young person. The state spends \$32,200 per year to house a youth at the CYA and \$5,327 to educate a student.<sup>11</sup>

## References



1 National Council on Crime and Delinquency. Juveniles Taken into Custody Research Program, Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice. Total Admissions for Public and Private Facilities, 1994. Note these are admissions and don't represent 867,527 individuals. See glossary above.

2 Girls Incorporated National Resource Center & Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Prevention and Parity: Girls in Juvenile Justice. Indianapolis, IN: Girls Incorporated, June 1996, p.6. Incarceration data is based on one-day counts in public facilities.

3 Camp, George M. and Camille Graham. The Corrections Yearbook, 1995. South Salem, NY: Criminal Justice Institute, 1995, p.22. (Twenty-nine state agencies reported data.)

4 National Center for Juvenile Justice. NCCJ In Brief, March 1997. Volume 1, No. 3, p.1.

5 National Council on Crime and Delinquency. Juveniles Taken into Custody Research Program, Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice. Total One Day Counts for Public Facilities, 1995. Population (ages 0-18) data from 1990 U.S. Census. This number from NCCD includes California Youth Authority, juvenile hall, and probation camp populations.

6 Conversation with Sue Easterwood at CYA 916-262-1485 on 4/10/97. CYA wards include youthful offenders ages 11-25. The vast majority of CYA wards (8,082 of the 8,664) were under 18 (and committed via a juvenile court) when the offense for which they were incarcerated was committed. Note that the CYA population, individuals for whom the CYA is responsible, was 9,925 on December 31, 1995. This number includes California Department of Corrections adult wards housed at the CYA.

7 California Youth Authority. Conversation with Bob Wedge 916-262-2750 on 4/2/97. One day count on December 31, 1995. See the next fact and reference for the other half of the CA juvenile incarceration picture. Note that CYA's figures (for CYA and juvenile halls and juvenile probation camps [19,150]) and NCCD's numbers (for total number of CA incarcerated youth [19,562]) based on one day counts aren't exactly the same.

8 California Department of the Youth Authority. First Commitment Characteristics, 1995. Sacramento, CA: California Department of the Youth Authority, August 1996. See the previous fact and reference for the other half of the CA juvenile incarceration picture.

9 California Department of the Youth Authority. First Commitment Characteristics, 1995. Sacramento, CA: California Department of the Youth Authority, August 1996. 1995 population data from the California Department of Finance, Demographic Research Department. 11-17 was used as the population base since the majority of the CYA (note, CYA figures represent one half of the CA youth incarceration picture) wards were under 18 when the offense for which they were incarcerated was committed. See reference 5 above. 10 *ibid*.

11 California Youth Authority, Office of Public Affairs. Ward Per Capita Cost, Fiscal year 1996/97. DOE data supplied by California Department of Education. The 1996/97 figure is an estimate and includes current expenditure per unit of average daily attendance as defined by the National Education Association. This figure excludes spending on capital outlay, debt service (bond payments, etc.), pre-school, adult and summer school.

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